

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: EPISODE 5

JESUS; GOD'S FINAL WORD
THE ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE FOR SIN - PART 2
HEBREWS 9:11-14
10/15/2017



MAIN POINT

Jesus' once and for all sacrifice for our sin made possible our relationship with God and results in our good works for Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most difficult sacrifice or decision that you've ever had to make?

How did this decision test your faith? How did your faith inform your decision at the time?

How did the results of that decision confirm and/or challenge your faith?

We all make sacrifices every day, but some we make are much harder to make than others. It's the hard ones that leave a lasting impression on us, for better or worse. As followers of Christ, though, we can remember that every sacrifice God asks us to make is a chance to strengthen our dependency on Him and remind us of the ultimate sacrifice—Jesus' once and for all sacrifice for our sins.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 9:11-14.

How did Christ eliminate the need for the ritual of sacrifice? Why is this significant to believers?

What makes the ordinances and acts of service we perform in the church different from the first covenant sacrificial system?

Earthly high priests had to make animal sacrifices to God regularly on behalf of sins, but Jesus' sacrificial death is a once and for all sacrifice—"by His own blood." Rituals, part of the Old Covenant, were seen as necessary to keep humanity in a right relationship with God. Ordinances are part of the New Testament church. They are symbolic acts of obedience to God. Nothing we do for God earns us favor before Him. Our favor has already been earned by Jesus. Believers in Christ are working from favor instead of for favor.

To what does “good things” (v. 11) refer? How have you experienced “good things” from Jesus in your life?

Earthly priests entered sanctuaries “made with hands” to offer animal sacrifices. The high priest could enter the “holy place” only once per year. He served in the presence of men and offered animal sacrifices to God. Christ is the Great High Priest in the eternal sanctuary. Christ’s sacrifice, through His death, is a once and for all sacrifice. Christ serves forever in the presence of God. Christ won blessings for believers by His sacrificial death. Jesus continues to bless His followers by His presence in their lives on a daily, ongoing basis. The good things were the blessings Christ won for believers by His sacrificial death. Although Christ has provided these blessings, not all Christians have experienced them. Believers are urged to claim their heritage.

How does Jesus’ sacrifice compare to the old system? Why is it superior?

What are some things that people have done in efforts to make themselves right before God?

What about you? Are you ever tempted to try and make yourself right before God based on something you’ve done? Why do you think we have that tendency?

Priests offered the blood of animals, but Jesus offered His own blood. Animal sacrifices did not provide spiritual benefits. They purified the flesh, or made people externally clean. They could not provide inner cleansing. Only Christ’s blood can thoroughly cleanse us from our sin. The old system was put into place to help people realize they were separated from God and needed His redemption. In other words, it was to help them see the seriousness of sin and the depth of their need for a Redeemer. The sacrifices themselves did not remove sin—only God’s accepting the sacrifice could cleanse sin. Jesus was a perfect sacrifice, so His one-time act saved all who trust in His work.

Why is a cleansed conscience important? How does the condition of your conscience affect the way you serve God?

This offering produces a cleansed conscience among those who commit themselves to Christ. Animal sacrifices cannot remove sin, but Jesus can. The cleansing produced a new aim and vision. Instead of producing acts that lead to death, it fostered service to the living God. Purity led to service and commitment to God. A guilty conscience makes it hard to be outwardly focused. A pure conscience leads to service and commitment to God.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

List some common religious attitudes or rituals we depend on, thinking they will keep us right with God. Which one is a personal struggle for you? How can you lay this aside and trust more fully in Christ?

How do we prevent reading the Bible, praying, and practicing other spiritual discipline from becoming rituals that we only perform with no heart or commitment?

Do you know anyone who is feeling or wrestling with the weight of their sin? How can you use this passage today to communicate to this person the forgiveness and cleansing found through Christ?

PRAY

Praise God for doing everything necessary to bring you into fellowship with Him. Thank God for the once and for all sacrifice that has cleansed your conscience and allowed you to live fully for Him.

COMMENTARY

HEBREWS 9:11-14

9:11. What did Jesus do under the new covenant? Jesus purifies believers for service. He supplied the real action which lay behind the symbols of the tabernacle and its ritual. Jesus' death had secured divine blessings for his people.

Christ came as high priest and accomplished good things for his people. The good things were the blessings Christ won for believers by his sacrificial death. Although Christ has provided these blessings, not all Christians have experienced them. Believers are urged to claim their heritage (Heb. 10:22-24).

Jesus came as high priest through the greater and more perfect tabernacle. This is a reference to Christ's ministry in heaven. That ministry was not a part of this creation. Jesus' ministry did not deal with shadows and copies of reality as did the Aaronic priests who served in the tabernacle. Jesus ministered in heaven before God and secured our acceptance.

9:12. Jesus' redemptive work consisted of offering his own blood, not the blood of goats and calves. Jesus had given himself. The blood of Jesus our High Priest was far more precious than the blood of animals. His was a once for all offering that never needed repeating. Christ's offering required no daily or even annual repetition. A single offering was eternally effective.

Some interpreters emphasize the idea that Christ took his blood into heaven as if our redemption depended on something which Jesus did after the cross. The statement that Jesus had obtained eternal redemption suggests that Jesus has accomplished redemption at the cross. It was by the blood shed at the cross that he entered heaven. All of Jesus' work for our salvation occurred at the cross, not subsequent to it.

9:13. What happened when Old Testament worshipers offered sacrifices? Did these offerings provide spiritual benefit for the offerers? These sacrifices sanctified the offerers so that they are outwardly clean. Goats and bulls probably spoke of offerings on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-19). The ashes of a heifer spoke of an offering which provided purification to the ritually unclean (Num. 19:1-10). These offerings were provisions for cleansing from fleshly defilement and provided temporary ceremonial purity. They could not give inner, spiritual cleansing. Only the blood of Christ could touch the conscience.

9:14. This verse argues from the lesser to the greater. If the blood of animals can provide external cleaning, how much more effective is the cleansing of Christ's blood. Three features made Christ's cleansing effective.

First, Christ made the offering through the eternal Spirit. This is probably not a reference to the Holy Spirit, but to Christ's own spirit. Christ made an inner spiritual response in which he offered himself. His response was not merely outward but inward and eternal. The Holy Spirit energized this response.

Second, Christ offered himself. Christ's offering was voluntary, and it represented an intelligent act of spiritual obedience to God.

Third, Christ offered his unblemished character to God. Jesus responded in perfect moral purity. The sacrifice was of infinite value.

This offering produces a cleansed conscience among those who commit themselves to Christ. Animal sacrifices cannot remove sin, but Jesus can. The cleansing produced a new aim and vision. Instead of producing acts that lead to death, it fostered service to the living God. Purity led to service and commitment to God.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Hebrews 10:1-25